

THE IDENTITY OF *RHYTIDEA BICOLOR* LINDL., A GEOPHYTE COLLECTED
IN CALIFORNIA BY WILLIAM LOBB

DAVID J. MABBERLEY¹

Wadham College, Parks Road, University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 3PN, United Kingdom;
Department of Biological Sciences, Macquarie University, NSW 2109; and National
Herbarium of New South Wales, Mrs Macquaries Road, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia

¹david.mabberley@rbsgysd.nsw.gov.au

ABSTRACT

In 1856 John Lindley made the first description of the firecracker flower, *Rhytidea bicolor* (now known as *Dichelostemma ida-maia*), naming a William Lobb collection exhibited in London. This binomial, despite its obvious priority, was proposed to be relegated to synonymy in *Taxon*, and is discussed here further.

RESUMEN

En 1856 John Lindley hizo la primera descripción de la flor *firecracker*, *Rhytidea bicolor* (ahora conocida como *Dichelostemma ida-maia*), nombrando una colección de William Lobb exhibido en Londres. Este binomial, a pesar de su prioridad, fue propuesto para ser relegado a la sinonimia en *Taxon*, y se discute aquí más.

Key Words: *Dichelostemma*, *Gardeners' Chronicle*, Lindley, Lobb, principle of priority, *Rhytidea*, Veitch.

In the nineteenth century, the British nursery firm of Veitch sent out plant-collectors to many parts of the world (Veitch 1906, Heriz-Smith 1988, 1989). William Lobb (1809–1864) collected in South America (1840–1848), and in California and Oregon (1849–1857) (Ewan 1973). In preparation for a new edition of *Mabberley's Plant-book* (Mabberley 2008), I found it necessary to look into Lobb's introductions; one of those was the plant now known as *Dichelostemma ida-maia* (Alph. Wood) Greene (Hoover 1940).

RHYTIDEA BICOLOR

In 1856, "a new hardy bulb from California" was introduced by Veitch at the Crystal Palace likely from collections made by Lobb (*Gardeners' Chronicle*, p. 375), and later that same year published by Lindley as *Rhytidea bicolor* Lindl. (1856, p. 420). The description is unmistakably the firecracker flower, now known as *Dichelostemma ida-maia* (Alph. Wood) Greene (Asparagaceae: Brodiaeaceae). Lobb collected for Veitch in California in 1849–51, there and in Oregon in 1852, returning again to California from 1854–1857 (Veitch 1906, Ewan 1973). Lobb stayed in California after ending his contract with Veitch, and died in San Francisco (Veitch 1906).

Dichelostemma ida-maia is based on *Brevoortia ida-maia* Alph. Wood, published over a decade later (Wood 1867). How Lindley's generic name came to be overlooked is unknown. It seems likely that the first introduction of the firecracker

flower was not successful in cultivation; the plant was not listed in the Veitch catalog (1906). A collection from Bolander was grown at Kew and Ipswich, and so Hooker introduced *Brevoortia coccinea* (A. Gray) S. Watson (a synonym) to England in 1870, noting the initial discovery of the plant by Lobb.

NOMENCLATURE

Rhytidea Lindl. postdates *Dichelostemma* Kunth, so does not pose a threat to the accepted generic name for the firecracker flower. *Rhytidea* would have precedence over *Brevoortia* Alph. Wood, should the plant ever be reconsidered worthy of separate generic status. It is worth noting that *Brevoortia* Gill (1861), also named after James Carson Brevoort (1818–1887), is the currently accepted name of a genus of fish, the menhaden of the Clupeidae.

Making a new combination in *Dichelostemma* based on *Rhytidea bicolor* would disturb almost 150 years of usage of the epithet '*ida-maia*', so such a course of action is not favored here. A formal proposal for rejection of *Rhytidea bicolor* Lindl. was prepared for *Taxon* (2015).

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